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C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000479

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [FJ](#)
SUBJECT: FIJI UPDATE: BAINIMARAMA CANCELS CHODS TRIP

REF: A. SUVA 477

[1](#)B. SUVA 471 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) Commander Bainimarama today canceled his PACOM-sponsored trip to the CHODS in Kuala Lumpur. He gave no explanation. We comment that the move raises questions about the Commodore's next steps. He and his senior officers have focused attention on alleged Australian meddling. Meanwhile, Police Commissioner Hughes has sought but has so far been denied a meeting with Bainimarama. End summary.

Bainimarama cancels CHODS trip without explanation

[1](#)2. (C) RFMF Commander Bainimarama's staff informed Embassy DATT on Tuesday morning, Nov. 7, that the Commodore will not travel to Kuala Lumpur for PACOM's Chiefs of Defense (CHODS) conference. He was to have departed Suva Nov. 11. As reported ref A, Australian and New Zealand High Commissions in Suva had inquired repeatedly whether the USG would rescind the PACOM invitation in light of Bainimarama's threats to the Fiji Government. That is no longer an issue. The cancelation does raise the follow on question, as yet unanswered: what motivated the cancelation?

RFMF is worried about the Aussies

[1](#)3. (C) The influx of ten Australian personnel to their High Commission in Suva (per ref A), in particular the arrival of some special-forces personnel, clearly has Bainimarama concerned. He reportedly phoned the Aussie DATT twice Monday evening seeking assurances, and the RFMF attempted to make contact with some of the newcomers directly. In a briefing for a group of diplomats on Tuesday, the RFMF speaker reportedly accused the Australian High Commission and its DATT of "lying" about who had arrived.

CEOs being investigated for colluding with RFMF

[1](#)4. (C) Fiji media have reported that the government has tasked the Public Service Commission (PSC) to investigate two CEOs for improper contacts with the RFMF. Presumably that relates to PM Qarase's advice to ambassadors on Nov. 3 (ref B) to please refrain from dealing with the CEOs of Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs on the current crisis.

Hughes seeks Bainimarama meeting without success

[1](#)5. (U) Police Commissioner Hughes has told the media he has repeatedly sought meetings with Bainimarama since the weekend

without success. Hughes indicated two motives: in part to reestablish what in the past has been a good relationship; and also, rather contrarily, to interview the Commodore about allegations of sedition.

Comment

¶6. (C) Bainimarama's canceling on CHODS neatly solves a problem for the USG. We don't have to decide whether his threats to remove Fiji's Government merit rescinding the invitation. The news does raise a serious question about the Commodore's intentions. It would appear he does not figure the Great Council of Chiefs meeting on Thursday will resolve Fiji's civil-military problem, so he feels the need to stay around. The worry is that his actions may play out in a coup; the hope is that they will not.
DINGER